

A DOLL ON MOUNT ETNA.

BY E. CAVAZZA.

ON the doorstep of the house sat little Lucia with one hand in the other. Within she heard the voice of her baby sister who was cooing with pleasure to see the mamma's broom sweep across the floor. Near the doorstep the speckled hen was scratching in the warm, black earth with her chickens around her. At the door of the stable stood the bay mare, snuffing the April air, and beside her was her colt, unsteady on his long legs. Two little pigs had found a cabbage-stalk, and in the middle of the road shared the dainty with soft grunts of content. The cat on the window-sill blinked her drowsy eyes in the sun, with the calm of a good conscience; in the hay-loft, among the grain, no rat dared venture—she could be surety for so much! From the road sounded the anvil of neighbor Memmu the blacksmith; and, farther away, the soldiers were at drill, and the officers were heard shouting, "*Per fil' a destr'—marche!*"

The young leaves of the Indian fig trees and the olives, of the vines and the maize, were bright against the side of the mountain, like countless points of cool, green flame. In the sky, the continual smoke of Etna waved like the plume of a giant's cap. Lucia's papa and her twin brother, Giuseppino, were at work, away there in the fields. If she were there, too, weeding between the rows of maize, it would have been a pleasure for her. She only had nothing to do—the little one, and the idleness wearied her. Finally, a cloud of dust and the noise of wheels drew her attention. It was a carriage that seemed to belong to a baron at least, she thought, with the fine horses and harnesses. It came to a halt at the door of Memmu's forge. The driver dismounted, and afterward a gentleman, a lady, and a little girl of Lucia's own age—about seven years. Lucia could hear all that they spoke, but could not understand a word. The driver, who was from Catania, explained to Memmu that one of the horses had cast a shoc. The blacksmith set himself to make another, while his boy Neddu blew the bellows and the coals redened. The lady and gentleman were not unlike others; Lucia had seen many travelers pass through the village. They would come up the road from Catania, and look in the sky at the smoke of the crater, and down at the black earth, and point here and there, and talk in such strange tongues

that Don Ambrogio had more than once said it was indeed a renewal of the confusion of Babel—these travelers. But the little lady—she carried in her arms a most beautiful doll! Lucia could not help going forward, timidly, and at a respectful distance, to admire it; while her serious, black eyes were round as the beads of a rosary, for wonder at this magnificent image of fine porcelain, with hair blonde as wheat, in a traveling gown of brown plaid wool, with the relative bonnet, bag, umbrella, even tiny, high-heeled bronze boots. The owner of the doll, however, appeared discontented.

"Mamma," she said in English—and Lucia, not understanding her language, thought it sounded like the idiom of the squirrels in the oaks of Bel-passo. "Mamma, what was I thinking of, to buy this horrid doll?"

"Don't interrupt Papa, darling. As you were saying, Frederic?"

"At the time of the eruption of 1669, the group of hills called the Monti Rossi suddenly appeared, and from these new craters came a flood of lava which spread over the southern slope of Etna, like the black waves of a sea, petrified in a moment of tempest."

"I don't like light hair for a doll, mamma; it is too common. All the girls have light-haired dolls. When we go back to Naples, can't I buy one with chestnut hair?"

"Even more dismal than this region, is the Valle del Bove. Clouds hang and twist continually above its black masses. It seems like a dead city of Dis—"

"Mamma, can't I? Say, can't I buy—"

Professor Alleyn forgot his descriptive eloquence and turned quickly toward his little daughter, who, it must be admitted, was a trifle spoiled.

"Gladys, I will not have you so petulant. Since you do not care for your doll, you shall give her at once to that little Italian girl."

"I think Gladys is tired," said gentle Mrs. Alleyn. "She is not usually so silly." The mother drew her little girl to her side, while the professor went on to speak of the chemical composition of lava, and to wish that it might be possible to examine a quantity of it while still heated, in order to determine the nature of its crystalline deposits.

His wife heard his discourse with interest, yet her mind was a little preoccupied by the effect likely to be produced upon Gladys, by the sudden command to give up her doll, bought a few days before in the largest toy-shop of Naples. Gladys waited for her papa to finish speaking; then:

"I am sorry I was naughty," she whispered. "But I wish I loved my dolly more, if I am to give her away."

Mrs. Alleyn comprehended that her little daughter's words came partly from a tenderness for the doll, partly from a curious penitent wish to make a little sacrifice. Gladys went toward Lucia.

"Her name is Margherita," said the American girl.

"Si, si — Margherita — bella, bella, bella!" answered Lucia with more kisses.

"Come, Gladys, we are ready to go now," said the professor. And as he seated the little girl beside her mamma, "Did you think Papa a little severe with his chatterbox?"

"I am glad you told me to give that little girl my doll. She is just perfectly delighted. And I have twenty-six dolls, and a hundred and twenty-nine paper dolls, anyway."

"When they come down the mountain," said



"'COME, GLADYS, WE ARE READY TO GO NOW,' SAID THE PROFESSOR."

"Little girl," she said. Lucia understood nothing. Neighbor Memmu had shod the horse and was helping the coachman put him to the carriage.

"Little girl, this doll is for you."

Lucia, encouraged by the smile of Gladys, came timidly, touched with her brown forefinger the hem of the doll's dress, then kissed it seriously. Gladys thrust the doll into Lucia's arms.

"È tua questa —" here the professor paused, not having learned, in course of his correspondence with the Italian scientists, the word for *doll*.

But Lucia understood now. She kissed alternately the gown of the doll and the small gloved hands of Gladys.

Lucia to herself, "I shall offer to that little lady one of my hen's eggs. It is little, but one does what one can."

The doll seemed to her a worthy namesake of the good and beautiful queen whose photograph had been shown her by the corporal of the garrison. She did not yet dare treat the doll familiarly — to play it was her little girl.

"Signora," she said to it, "do me the favor to accommodate yourself on the doorstep while I seek the egg. Mamma, Mamma, come and see!"

Lucia's mamma, whose name was Marina, appeared at the door.

"See my beautiful doll!"

"Oh, what a doll! She looks like the images of the saints in the church, and is dressed just like a queen. Who has given her to you?"

"A little lady, that was passing in a carriage, with her papa and mamma, and the horse lost a shoe so that *Compare* Memmu had to make another."

"And what had you done for her?"

"Nothing. I was only looking at her. But I shall tell my hen to let me have a fresh egg to give her."

The doll was laid carefully upon the doorstep while Lucia hastened to search for the egg. But, unfortunately, that day the hen had forgotten to leave one in the nest for her little mistress. Lucia returned, with empty hands, to find her doll. What had happened? The beautiful blue eyes, blue as flowers of the lavender, were closed. The doll appeared to sleep. "She is tired with the journey from Catania," thought Lucia, and sat down to watch the slumbers of the doll. At last it seemed to her that the doll had slept long enough.

"Wake, Signora Margherita!" she said, very softly. The porcelain eyelids did not move. Lucia spoke again, and louder; but without effect. Marina came again to the door, at the cry: "Oh, Mamma, Mamma, my doll is dead!"

"What did you do to her?"

"Nothing. When I came back, her eyes were shut and I thought her asleep. My doll is dead!" sobbed Lucia, with the corner of her apron at her eyes.

"I do not believe her dead; no," said Marina. "Such a fine lady, however, might very well faint away, to be brought to the house of poor people."

Marina lifted the doll to its feet; the mechanism of its eyes worked as usual, and Margherita, wide awake, seemed to look with content upon her squalid surroundings.

The doll soon became the talk of the neighborhood. "It will be a thousand years before I can make one like that on my anvil," said Memmu the blacksmith.

The women never tired of wondering at its fine clothes, all but *Zia* Caterina, who shook her head with its yellow kerchief and said, "It seems like witchcraft. It is not an image of a saint—well, what is it then, to do the miracle of winking its eyes? I wish it may not bring you bad luck, *Cocomare* Marina." The other women contradicted her, and would have justice for the doll, shaking their distaffs in the face of *Zia* Caterina. Don Ambrogio, the parish priest, admired the doll; and the archbishop himself was reported to have smiled to see Lucia seated on the doorstep with Margherita in her arms. After that, *Zia* Caterina might say what appeared pleasing to her!

The month of May was more than half passed. Marina sat at her door spinning; while, near her, Lucia rocked the cradle occupied by baby Agatuzza at one end, and the famous doll at the other. The mamma sang one of the popular songs of the country, which ran somewhat like this:

"I lost my distaff on Sunday,
I looked for it all day Monday,
Tuesday, I found it cracked and split,
Wednesday, took off the flax from it,
Thursday, I combed the flax quite clean,
And Friday sat me down to spin,
On Saturday I must spin it all,
For Sunday is a festival!"

Marina's husband, whose name was Celestino, came along the road, together with the corporal. They were looking with some anxiety at the sky. A column of thick, black smoke arose from the crater, and, higher in the air, separated into great whirling masses that waved like banners.

"There is the smoke of the enemy," said the corporal. "Let us hope that we may not have to feel his fire!"

That night the neighbors, assembled at the inn, watched the smoke. As it grew darker, red, glowing streams of lava were seen to run down the side of the mountain from new openings, near the crater of Monte Nero. The windows of the village rattled with the explosions which took place more and more frequently. A reddish vapor spread itself upward from the stream of lava. The bells of the town rang mournfully, while the people cried, "The lava, the lava!"

In the morning it was no better. The lava seemed to make its way in a sluggish current toward the towns of Nicolosi and Belpasso.

In a few days news came that the *oliveto* of neighbor Brasi, a few miles above the village, was on fire. "And the trees cry out for pain, like so many living souls, so that it is a pity to hear them," said Bellonia, his wife.

In truth, either because the sap was become suddenly heated, or for some other reason, the poor olive trees made a whimpering sound as the lava scorched them. Bellonia, Marina, and the other women took down from the dingy walls of their rooms the colored pictures of the saints, and fixed them upon sticks, at the edge of the vineyards. At the northern limit of the fields the vines already began to burn, although the lava was not yet near the village of Nicolosi.

"If the wells should burst," said Celestino, "as that pond did that the good soul of my father used to tell of, we are lost."

"The water must be drawn off," recommended neighbor Turiddu.

"Eh! One can't live without water, for man and beasts. It is an ill death to die of thirst."

"I tell you, better drain the wells! Who knows if Heaven will not send us a little rain, afterward?" said a more hopeful person.

"Better quit the town, and then if the wells burst, they burst," said the corporal, who was of the group.

"And I am ruined, I am," said *Compare* Brasi, he of the olive-trees. "I and my family, we shall be in the middle of the road, asking alms."

The terror lasted for nearly a fortnight. The noise of the lava was like the rattling of great hail-

up the hill, while the people cried, "Viva Sant' Antonio!" "Do us the favor, Sant' Antonio!" With banners and psalmody, they took him up to the Altarelli — which is a small structure of three arches painted, in the Byzantine manner, with curious stiff figures of saints. They set the image in front of the lava; the glass eyes stared at it in vain. "All the saints together could not work this miracle," said Brasi; and soon the image was brought back into the *piazza*.

Before the close of the second week, the telegraph operator received official notice to remove. Many of the people were gone to Pedara, to Tre-



"GLOWING STREAMS OF LAVA WERE SEEN TO RUN DOWN THE SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN."

stones upon tiles, with frequent explosions like the firing of cannon. The images of the saints, Sant' Antonio and the others, were taken from their quiet shelter in the churches, where candles were burned and the floors and doorways were strewn with rose-petals and bunches of sweet herbs and the yellow flowers of the broom, that sent forth delicate odors. The images had to come out and stand in the *piazza* to encourage the people. The daylight was not flattering to their appearance. Their wooden faces painted in not the palest tint of pink, their round glass eyes without intelligence, and the tinsel and jewels of their robes looked gaudy enough in the open air. Then Turiddu and Celestino and Memmu gave a hand to the litter whereupon the image of Sant' Antonio was carried

castagni; but more remained, unwilling to leave their homes. The officers and soldiers of the garrison counseled the peasants to depart, since from day to day the lava threatened the village. Those who still remained packed their goods, and great cart-loads were sent along the road eastward. Marina, full of care, had no more time to admire Lucia's doll. With the aid of her husband, she had taken out of the house their small stock of furniture, bedding, dishes, and clothes, and arranged them in the cart, which was painted in vivid colors. Also Giuseppino and Lucia did what they could. They put the cat into a basket made of rushes, and tied a piece of cloth over, so that she could not escape. Giuseppino made a slip-noose to catch the little pigs, that soon after,

squealing, with their feet tied, were thrust into a sack and placed among the other valuables in the cart. Lucia stood near, with her doll in her arms, dismayed by the confusion of carts and carriages, some taking into safety the inhabitants of Nicolosi, others bringing strangers to see the lava, as if it were a festival with Bengal lights.

Giuseppino, near the hen-coop, was trying to secure the hen and her brood. "Eh, how she runs, the poor little beast!" he said. "Come, Lucia, she is your hen; come and catch her."

The hen ruffled her wings as if she would defy not only the children, but Etna itself. Lucia seated her doll on a little hay behind the hen-coop, and helped her brother to reduce the hen to discipline. They had not yet succeeded when Marina called her daughter.

"Come here, Lucia!"

"Yes, Mamma. I'm coming, coming."

"Run quick to the house of the *nonna*, and tell her we shall come in a half hour to take her; and you, Lucia, do what you can to help her."

"Oh, willingly."

The *nonna* was not really Lucia's grandmother, but her father's. She was old, and had seen many things, of which — and also of giants and princesses and sirens — she knew how to tell famous stories when the Christmas *ceppo* was lighted on the hearth. She never came to an end of her stories and rhymes, and had a dried fig and two kisses, always, for good children. And to help the good *nonna*, Lucia left her hen and ran along the road like a fawn. Then, remembering her doll, she called back over her shoulder, "Giuseppino, oh, Giuseppino-o-o! Take care of Margherita-a-a-a-A!"

"Brava! With that voice we will have you for trumpeter!" commented the corporal, as she ran past him. But, alas, in the uproar of the road and the bombardment of the mountain, her brother could not hear her. And, being a boy, he forgot the doll in the glory of the conquest of the hen. At last, the *chioccia* and her brood were in a basket on the cart. Celestino had taken off the shutters, the latches and hinges, even some of the tiles of the roof and the floor of his house; and these, with similar belongings of other persons, were loaded upon an ox-cart. Marina had put a halter on the neck of the colt, thereby the more easily to lead him behind the cart to which his mother was harnessed.

"Are we ready, Marina?"

"Yes. Oh, my little house! Who knows if I shall ever see again my poor little roof? We were so content, were we not, Celestino?"

"Yes, yes, indeed. But Lucia; where is she?"

"With the *nonna*, waiting for us."

"*Su, Maddalena, come up!*" This was to the mare.

The cart began to move. The colt trotted weakly, not to fall behind his mother, who walked with long steps. Marina sat on top of her goods, her baby in her arms, while Celestino guided the mare on foot, and little Giuseppino kept pace behind with his friend the colt. Arrived at the house of the grandmother, they found her standing at the doorway, with Lucia at her side, and dressed in her best plaid cotton gown, and clean apron and kerchief, content as if she were going to mass. Marina gave the *nonna* her own place on the cart, while she herself, with Lucia by the hand, walked, carrying her baby on her shoulder.

The road to Pedara was blocked with carts and with persons on foot, with goats, and sheep, and cattle, straying to this side and that, driven by men and watch-dogs. The people were in a panic terror; some wept, some prayed, some moaned, beating their arms, and others appeared stupefied. Trumpets were blown as a signal that the village should be cleared, officers and soldiers were everywhere to help, cheer, and advise the peasants. "Truly," complained the corporal, "I make myself into four, I make myself; but even so, I can't do everything!"

The archbishop caused the relics and the images from the churches to be carried toward Pedara; and the mayor and other officials ran here and there to direct things as the procession moved.

It was only by slow degrees that Celestino and his family approached Pedara. Marina wept like a fountain; and the grandmother repeated, "We must have patience," while the sighs came from her heart to think of the village that would soon be buried under the lava. They encamped for the night among the yellow broom that grew in tufts, in bushes as far as one could look, so that it appeared endless. Through the early hours of the night, people were passing, and added their shouts to the crashing bursts of the volcano.

Suddenly little Lucia awoke to the consciousness that her dear doll was not in her arms. Where was Margherita? Was she safe in the cart, or had she been left in the village, a prey to the lava? Tears came into Lucia's eyes. "No, I must not wake mamma, who is so tired, nor the dear *nonna*, nor papa who has worked so hard," she said to herself. But she could not refrain from giving a gentle push to her brother. He awoke and said, "What is the matter, Lucia?"

"Margherita — did you bring her with you?"

"Oh! what should I do with a doll?" answered the boy, a little roughly — precisely because he was so sorry.

"I called to you, while I was running to the house of the *nonna*."

"And I did not hear you."

"You might have brought my poor Margherita."

"It is true, Lucia. Will you forgive me?"

She kissed him in token of pardon. Lucia crept back to her place beside the *nonna*; both children lay still, but it was only Giuseppino who slept. Lucia had in time come to love her doll like a little mamma; Margherita no longer seemed to her a great lady. Lucia could not bear the thought

thought of her doll impelled her, and she hastened forward.

At last she reached Nicolosi. Was this her own town? A light rain of warm sand and ashes was falling, the streets and the *piazza* were deserted.

Now and then she heard the howl of a vagrant dog. She put her hand against the wall of a building to guide herself. By the broken corner of a stone, she knew it to be the house of neighbor Nanni. Her own home would be the next house. She half saw, half felt her way to the hen-coop.



"MARINA CAUGHT HER LITTLE DAUGHTER IN HER ARMS."

of the deserted doll; perhaps at that very moment the lava was entering the town. Margherita would be covered deep with the hot lava!—at the idea Lucia herself felt suffocated. She was resolved. Without noise, she arose and moved softly away toward the road. She knew the way, and was not afraid; the road was lined with wagons, near which mules, horses, and donkeys were tethered, while the peasants slept under or beside the carts, as it might chance. Many were awake, but none would harm a little girl, or even notice her in the apathy which followed their alarm and toil. Lucia made her way toward Nicolosi, with her head and limbs heavy with sleep, so that she often swayed from side to side as she walked, and could hardly lift her feet from the ground. Her mind was confused with dreams. Then a new explosion and a fresh

"Margherita, are you here?" she said, and was frightened to hear her own voice in the solitude. She groped with her hands behind the hen-coop, caught the doll in her arms, and kissed it many times.

Then came a great explosion. It seemed to Lucia as if the end of the world were come; the shower of ashes and sand fell thicker; and the little girl, clasping her doll, ran as fast as she could from the town. When she had reached the first encampment of people, she felt quite safe. The corporal, with some soldiers, came by.

"Who is this? Little Lucia! What are you doing here?"

"Signor Caporale, I returned for my doll."

"*Via!* You are worse than Lot's wife. What will your mamma say? Have you thought of that?"

It seems to me that she will be capable of scolding you a little. Run along to her!"

Before dawn the weary Lucia was not far from the place where she had left the family. Marina, with her white *mantellina* over her head, was running up and down the road among the people, crying like one possessed:

"My child, my Lucia! Who has seen my little Lucia?"

"Here I am, Mamma."

Marina caught her little daughter in her arms, and hastened back to the *nonna*, who sat tending the baby. Giuseppino was still asleep.

"Here she is; she is safe!" exclaimed Marina.

The boy awoke and opened his eyes, still full of sleep.

"Oh! you found your doll, Lucia?"

"You did wrong, little one," said the grandmother, but not until she had kissed Lucia. "Do you know you have caused a great fright to us who love you so dearly?"

"Nonna, I could not, no, leave my dear Margherita all alone. Don't you remember, she fainted only to come to the house of poor people? Alone, with no one to speak a good little word to her. Indeed, she might have had a fulminating apoplexy."

"Oh, we admit," said Lucia's papa, "that the doll is a great lady, and so delicate that you are right to keep her as if in cotton-wool. But, another time, think also a little of the rest of us!"

"I did wrong," answered Lucia. "I know it."

"And you proved yourself a brave girl," said Celestino, who, having done his paternal duty in the mild reproof, now gave himself the satisfaction of pride in his daughter. "You have a good heart—and good little legs, Lucia."

After their breakfast of black bread and a few olives, the family set forth again on their way to the house of a brother of Marina, who lived beyond Pedara, on the road to Tremestieri. There they

would remain until the fate of their own town should be decided.

Day by day, the stream of lava grew more sluggish, and finally came to a standstill, barely touching the wall of the Altarelli, three hundred kilometers from the northern outskirts of the village of Nicolosi. A fortnight after the abandonment of the town the trumpets blew joyfully, as a signal for the people to return to their homes. It was a fine procession. First went the archbishop and the priests, with the images and relics and brilliantly colored banners; and the people came after, led by the civil authorities and the soldiers, with psalms and shouts and military music.

The streets and the *piazza* were readily cleared of the layer of sand and ashes rained upon them from the volcano; shutters and doors were hung again upon their hinges, tiles were replaced, and household goods set in order. The town had never seemed so dear, and all were happy and content.

"It is a fine thing to be able to end one's days where one was born," said the *nonna* to Lucia.

Lucia had not thought of that; but she felt it to be a fine thing to live when one has a mamma, a papa, a grandmamma, a brother, a baby sister,—and a doll.

It only remains to say that Professor Alleyn and his family returned one day, before the lava was cooled, and made the ascent of Etna as far as Monte Albano, in company with some distinguished Italian scientists. It is now thought—the professor told me at a reception—that incandescent lava is not to be regarded as an uniformly fused mass, resembling the *scoriae* of a foundry, but owes its crystalline deposits to the chemical results of a gradual process of fusion. It may be so. Who among us has enough polysyllables at command to refute the theory? But more interesting to me was the story of the doll, which one of the Italian professors heard at Nicolosi. He told it to Gladys, and she told it to me.

